

NAPOLEON AND HENRY IV.

BY THE EDITOR.

CHURCH politics have become of great interest of late on account of several ecclesiastical defeats which, however, the Church stands much better than the secular government of any nation, and bethinking himself of another low ebb of ecclesiastical power, our contributor and friend, Mr. F. W. Fitzpatrick, writes in his usual pointed style most interestingly concerning the relation of Napoleon I to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in general. Mr. Fitzpatrick thinks that Napoleon actually possessed in his character a tendency to believe "at heart that the benediction of the Pope and other forms of the coronation actually rendered his person sacred." But it seems that his actions, especially his brutal treatment of the Pope himself, go far to prove the contrary, and (at least so far as I can see) it is quite sufficient to assume that Napoleon wanted the people to believe in the efficacy of religious ceremonies. In order to impress this view upon the imagination of the general public, he frequently and ostentatiously made comments that would make the people think that he himself believed in them.

Who will deny that Napoleon's method was quite effective? He was an upstart without tradition or history, but he was always anxious to make up for it in every way he could. He married the daughter of the oldest dynasty of Europe, a princess of the imperial house of Habsburg-Lothringen, whose reigning emperor had just abdicated the dignity of emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and changed his title to that of Emperor of Austria.

Napoleon wished to pose as the renewer of a universal empire and appear as a successor of both Cæsar and Charlemagne, and for this reason he laid so much stress on an official coronation in which the Pope's benediction should not be missing, but his practical instinct made him avoid the mistakes of the German kings who had been crowned Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire. They had

recognized papacy as the highest spiritual office, and in spite of many quarrels with the popes had always treated them with the respect due to their pontifical dignity which went even so far as the humiliation of Henry IV, who did penance at Mathilda's castle of Canossa before Gregory the Great, and thus humbled himself before the spiritual authority of the Church.

Napoleon endeavored to avoid in the very principle any possible interpretation of the Pope's position as superior, and he used the methods of Petrucchio in "Taming of the Shrew." He applied brutal force and showed an open disrespect which rendered the



HENRY IV AT CANOSSA.

Pope meek and frequently made him actually tremble at the threat of violence. Howsoever we may blame Napoleon for ungentlemanly behavior in this respect, we must confess that the result justified his method. He had all the advantages of the sanction of the Church, and yet no one could say that he received his crown at the hands of the Pope. In the ceremony he had remained master of the situation, and the Pope had appeared in it merely as one of his officials who did his bidding.

The coronation of Napoleon, as painted by Napoleon's famous contemporary, Jacques Louis David, forms a contrast to Henry IV's

submission at Canossa. The ancient dynasty of the Holy Roman Empire of German nationality had received its crown from the hand of the Pope, and it had finally to submit to papal authority, while



J. L. DAVID'S CORONATION OF NAPOLEON.

Napoleon crowned himself and compelled the Pope to give him with his blessing, all the religious sanction the Church could lend him; but in all this he remained the master, and the Pope simply obeyed him.

It is both interesting and instructive to watch the contentions of these two powers, the secular government and the authority of a strong religious institution which sways the consciences of many millions of people. It seems as if we had solved the problem by the principle of an absolute separation of Church and State, as well as religion and politics, but our solution is by no means perfect, and we are now and then confronted with milder and less virulent relapses into the old difficulties.